
Ancient India, A History of its Culture and Civilization by D. D. Kosambi

Review by: A. K. Narain

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In the political realm the object should be change by orderly means, not stability *per se*; and to this end, Washington should pay close attention to leaders of the Congress and opposition parties, and concern itself with sound political development. Here Professor Palmer opens himself up to a possible charge of advocating neo-colonialism. This is suggested, too, by the advice to cultivate opposition leaders in Pakistan, as well as the special interests of East Bengal. In foreign policy he urges quiet diplomacy to foster an informal alliance with India, which will not compel it formally to abandon non-alignment, and to "mend fences" with Pakistan—though he shares Selig Harrison's view of the limits of possible American intervention in South Asia. He acknowledges the Indo-Pakistan conflict to be one of the most intractable in international relations, and strongly advises against open choice of either party. He urges a pragmatic approach to U.S. aid for planning, including the public sector, aid without strings and without demands regarding a Kashmir settlement, and the use of bilateral and multilateral channels. He also advises writing off a large part of the American counterpart rupee funds. Those to whom these recommendations are addressed would do well to read this book, while students of the area will benefit from the focus on the region as a whole.

McGill University

Michael Brecher

Kosambi, D. D.: *Ancient India, A History of its Culture and Civilization*, (New York, Pantheon Books — A division of Random House, 1965), XI + 243 pp., 16 figures, 6 maps + 98 plates, \$6.95.

The book has rightly been described on the jacket as a "strikingly original combination of history, archaeology and anthropology." It consists of seven chapters entitled respectively "The historical perspective," "Primitive life and pre-history," "The first cities," "The Aryans," "From tribe to society," "State and religion in greater Magadha" and "Towards Feudalism."

It is clear from the chapter and section headings that Kosambi has selected them arbitrarily and with a bias. But this does not detract from the importance of the book. The book is certainly a valuable and significant contribution to Indological studies. It is stimulating and unconventional. After reading the book one can understand the remark of the author in the preface that, "much that has been talked about India's glorious past, unhampered by fact or common sense is even more free than Indian elections. Discussions eddies round obscure dates and deservedly obscure biographies of kings and prophets. It seems to me that something more might be achieved in the way of charting the main currents of Indian history, notwithstanding the lack of the kind of source material which in other countries, would be considered essential by the historian. That at any rate, is what this book attempts to do, with a minimum of scholarly display." It is true, the questions Kosambi has asked in writing the book are most vital for any study of Indian history and culture, and he undoubtedly brought fresh insight to the treatment of these problems. But the real handicap is admittedly the sources. They just do not reveal so much as Kosambi would like them to.

But since the book provokes thinking the sources will have to be re-examined. And even if the re-examination does not substantiate Kosambi's conclusions, the questions raised by him remain a challenge to scholarship. Thus Kosambi's book is not so important for its answers but for the questions he has asked. The general reader and the student must read the book but with caution. Naturally, whereas almost every page is full of ideas which compel one to think, one also gets statements which are unwarrantedly bold and unnecessarily speculative; there are some factual mistakes too. To give only a few random examples, Kosambi suggests identification of a charioteer attacking the aborigines with a discus in a cave drawing round in the Mirzapur District, datable according to him in 800 B.C., with Krishna (p.115)! "Regular coinage had come into use before the end of the 7th century, to judge by the coins found" (p. 124) is an incorrect statement. Similarly, "the weight of Karshapanas goes back to Indus valley culture" (p.124) is unjustifiable. It is also incorrect to say, that "the founder of the dynasty (here the author means the Kushanas), Kanishka I, seems to have issued coins only under the magnificent style and title 'Great Saviour', *soter megas* or *maha-trata*, without a personal name" (p.189). His suggestion on the basis of the evidence of Hsiuan-tsang that the *Gītā* was a Brahmin's forgery written to incite a king to war against his own cousins (p. 208) will fail to find support.

It however goes to the credit of the late Professor D. D. Kosambi that in spite of his professional discipline in mathematics and statistics, and his acknowledged contribution in genetics, he could be so up-to-date in such fields of study as the history, archaeology and anthropology of India. I have had the good fortune of knowing personally both him and his father, the well known scholar of Pali and Buddhism. A dynamic personality, a hardworking and robust man, a brilliant scholar, Prof. D. D. Kosambi has left his impress on whatever he touched and whomsoever he came in touch with. With his death, in July 1966, more than one field of scholarship has lost an active member. I take this opportunity to pay my homage to his memory.

Banaras Hindu University

A. K. Narain

Coedès, G.: *The Making of South East Asia*. Translated by H. M. Wright, (Berkeley - Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1966), XVI + 268 pp., + XVI illus., \$6.00.

Coedès' *Les Peuples de la Péninsule Indochinoise* (Paris, 1962), of which this is a translation, is both a sequel and an addendum to his earlier and longer *Les états hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie* (Paris, 1948). At numerous points the new work either copies verbatim or paraphrases passages from the 1948 book. The author, of course, excludes materials relating to Malaya and Indonesia and also deletes a number of passages discussing variant interpretations by other scholarly authorities. The most valuable addition is Coedès' informed discussion of Sinitized Vietnam. Much less valuable is his faltering attempt to extend his history of the principal peoples of continental Southeast Asia into modern times.